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ABSTRACT

As part of an attempt to develop a multicultural model of teacher education that incorporates and embraces Anishinaabe philosophy, interviews were conducted with seven Anishinaabe elders from one Canadian and three U.S. reservations. Eight themes emerged. In order of their importance to the meaning and experience of being Anishinaabe, they are respect, stories, Ojibwe language, maintaining or reviving culture, ceremonies, spirituality, learning from the elders, and emotionality. Respect includes respect for others, for difference, and for Nature. Stories are important because many ideas, values, and traditions were taught through stories. The language contains and perpetuates the depth, subtleties, and nuances of the culture. Without language, the songs, ceremonies, and oral traditions would be lost. Traditions must be kept alive because they constitute a training process that teaches discipline, an appropriate attitude toward Mother Earth, and an understanding and purpose of being. Ceremonies are how the Anishinaabe express their spirituality and connection with all beings. They create and support the sense of community that is the foundation of tribal life. Anishinaabe spirituality emphasizes the harmony that comes from their connection with all parts of the universe, in which everything has a purpose and is valued. Elders teach the children based on their life experience and cultural knowledge. The concept of emotionality expresses the intensity with which the elders felt the importance of these themes. (TD)

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EUROCENTRIC EDUCATION UNHINGED: CHALLENGES POSED BY THE ELDERS AND TEACHINGS OF THE ANISHINAABEG

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Eurocentric Education Unhinged: Challenges Posed by the Elders and Teachings of the Anishinaabeg

My own K-12 educational experience was demoralizing. I was immersed in a public school curriculum that was fundamentally Eurocentric in nature. As I began teaching in higher education I became frustrated seeing pre-service teachers continuing to be instructed in this paradigm. My original intention was to develop a multicultural model that incorporated and embraced Anishinaabe philosophy as its framework. In this way, I believed that I could make a difference by educating a primarily White teacher population on the needs of its Native students. As I reflected on this undertaking, I realized that my own knowledge base of my culture was nearly nonexistent. I had been well indoctrinated in the Eurocentric canon, which continues to prevail in our public schools. It became painfully apparent that I needed to re-educate myself. I turned to my natural teachers: My Elders.

Multicultural Education

In order to understand the significance of this phenomenological work that I did with these Elders, it is important

understand the current state of multicultural education. Public school demographic trends have changed dramatically in recent years. Bennett (1995) estimates that by the year 2000 over 30% of the school-age population will be students of color. Meacham (1996) further projects that by the year 2020, 1 out of every 3 Americans will be a person of color, and that students of color will make up almost 50% of the student population. Because of these changing demographic realities, there are increasing challenges to the maintenance of a Eurocentric hegemony. This has resulted in debate and frustration, if not a sense of uncertainty and threat, in the field of education. Bassey (1997) argues, that not only are people of color omitted from the current curriculum, but non-Europeans are marginalized and viewed as inferior, or at best are represented as voiceless objects.

According to Wright and Tierney (1991), included among those who have been rendered voiceless are American Indians and Alaskan Natives who have been victims of historic structural racism, as each tribe and nation has struggled to preserve its unique identity, language, culture, tradition, and heritage since the time of contact.

Swisher and Deyhle (1994) argue that not until educators accept their American Indian students' culture and traditions as valid can meaningful curriculum be created that focuses not only on incorporating the American Indian into the curriculum, but also concentrates on the needs of the American Indian student. However, understanding American Indian culture cannot take place in a meaningful way without the support and assistance of the Elders.

According to Deloria (1995), Garrett (1996), and Gilliland (1999), Elders have historically provided the cultural, ceremonial, and historical teachings to the American Indian. Elders are given the highest respect and are honored for all that they have learned. "This respect for wisdom of the tribal Elders is a foundation of strength for the Indian community" (Gilliland, 1999, p. 26).

Because "American Indian" encompasses such a wide group of people, and each tribe has their unique culture and traditions, the Anishinaabeg have been selected because of (a) their proximity, (b) accessibility, and (c) because it is my heritage.

Method

The topic of this study is well suited for qualitative design because it focuses on discovering the meaning and experiences of Anishinaabe Elders. The topic is also well suited for qualitative research because the researcher is Anishinaabe and can best understand some of the subtleties of the experiences of the Anishinaabeg.

Because the research question is geared toward exploring the essence of being Anishinaabe, the phenomenological approach was selected. The purpose of phenomenology is to look for meaning. Phenomenology is the study of events as they appear in human experiences and not as discrete entities in themselves. It is important that this study was geared toward meaning and not looking for explanations or causes as most research on American Indians has done in the past. The Elders I interviewed were pleased that this type of study was being done by "one of their own."

In the past many American Indians have felt exploited by non-Native researchers and a history of mistrust has developed. As Swisher (1996) explains:

> Research on Indian history and culture must consider Indian perspectives. Methodology using tribal histories and other information about

> historical and cultural processes not found in primary and secondary source materials will avoid perpetuation of stereotypes. American Indian scholars need to become involved in producing research rather than serving as subjects and consumers of research. Measures such as these will ultimately introduce more accurate depictions of Indian experience and lifestyles into the classroom. (p. 84)

Sample and Population

I interviewed 7 Anishinaabe Elders (3 men and 4 women) who I have known for over four years and have developed a trusting relationship with them. The numbers 4 and 7 are very significant to this study. Four is an important, if not sacred number to the Anishinaabe people, such as the Four Sacred Directions, the Four Sacred Elements, the four colors, the four seasons, and the four cycles of life. The number 7 is representative of the Seven Grandfathers who gave the Anishinaabeg the Sweat Lodge, the Seven Prophets and the Seven Fires, and the belief that we are in the Seventh Fire.

Each of the Elders (known as coresearchers in this study) agreed to participate in two 45-60 minute interviews. The first interview was in-depth and open-ended. The second interview involved each coresearcher validating the results of the first interview by verifying the accuracy of the transcripts. The

coresearchers were given the opportunity to affirm or negate the results. This addressed the faithfulness to the phenomenon criteria and insured validity of the study.

Coresearchers

The 7 Elders represented 3 reservations that are located in Minnesota (Fond du Lac Reservation, Red Lake Reservation, and Grand Portage Reservation) and 1 Canadian Reserve (Big Island First Nation). Each of these Elders has been acknowledged for their contributions to the tribal community. These contributions include one or more of the following gifts: knowledge of cultural Anishinaabe traditions and values, fluency in the Ojibwe language, participation in tribal leadership, and spiritual leadership and guidance.

Each coresearcher was approached in the traditional Anishinaabe way, which is the offering of tobacco followed by the request for an interview. All Elders approached accepted the tobacco as a sign of their willingness to participate and to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted where the coresearcher felt most comfortable, either at their workplace or in their home. Before the interview commenced, each coresearcher was presented

once again with tobacco, and as is customary in the Anishinaabe way of life, a gift of appreciation was presented.

Coresearcher Narratives

Third person narratives were developed in order to obtain a sense of each individual Elder's perspective. These narratives generated the themes and subthemes as they emerged from the text. The themes basically took on a life of their own, with words and phrases taking on more meaning than others over the course of analysis. The themes generated are not simple or one dimensional, rather they are often interrelated and overlapping. The themes reflect the diversity of the stories told by the coresearchers, and revealed many different patterns of their understanding of the meaning of being Anishinaabe. The data generated from the interviews with the coresearchers revealed 8 themes. The themes are: (a) Respect, (b) Stories, (c) Ojibwe Language, (d) Keep Traditions Alive/Bring Back the Culture, (e) Ceremonies, (f) Spirituality, (g) Listen and Learn From the Elders, and (h) Emotionality.

The themes are listed in order of importance and sequence as related by the coresearchers of this study. All coresearchers agreed that Respect, Stories, Ojibwe Language, Keep Traditions

Alive/Bring Back the Culture, Spirituality, and Ceremonies are important to the experience and meaning of being Anishinaabe. Six of the coresearchers believed Listen and Learn From the Elders are important to knowing the meaning of being Anishinaabe, while four of the coresearchers expressed or stressed emotionality during their interviews.

Respect

Respect for people and their feelings are very important in Anishinaabeg society. Relationships between family members are based on mutual respect, and most Anisihnabe people are careful not to do anything disrespectful toward any individuals. In this study respect was further defined, and therefore divided into three subthemes: (a) Respect for Others, (b) Respect for Difference, and (c) Respect for Nature.

Respect and honoring others was viewed as important to the Anishinaabe coresearchers. The Anishinaabe life revolves around respect and honor of the people and the culture. It is also important to these coresearchers to incorporate respect into their daily lives.

> The Anishinaabe life entails respecting our culture, being proud of our culture. It means respecting other people and honoring our Elders. It makes me

> more appreciative of the Indian culture in the way we respect everything that grows and making sure that I offer tobacco. It is important to me that I respect and honor the Indian way. (CR #7)

Being respectful in the Anishinaabe life includes respect for those who are different, those who practice their culture differently, and those with whom you may not necessarily agree with.

> With the Anishinaabeg, one of our greatest values is respect and it is important to practice that respect whether you are within your home or in the outer world. That does not mean that you become subservient to everybody you meet and show them respect by bowing your head. No, that means that we respect each and every human being we come in contact with, even though we might not agree with everything the other person has to say. We have to remember that that person deserves respect because they are a person. (CR #6)

Respect is not a value that is reserved exclusively for humans. Nature is respected and deserves respect for what it brings the Anishinaabeg. Respect is also given to all other beings because humans were the last to be placed on Mother Earth.

> It was driven into us to respect. We were taught to respect the insect because we were put here last, and we are underneath the insect. So the insect has more of a right to be here than I do. (CR #4)

Stories

Anishinaabe stories are flexible in nature and scope. It is for this reason that they are best narrated. Skill and imagination enable the storyteller to impart any level of meaning according to the scope and ability of his/her audience (Johnston, 1976, p. 8). Many of the ideas, values and traditions were taught through stories. Stories were divided into two subthemes: (a) Our Stories are Important, and (b) Stories Told by the Coresearchers.

Stories, for these coresearchers, are an important aspect to Anishinaabe life. Stories are considered sacred. The Midewiwin Lodge teachings are considered sacred and are passed on through stories, which are told in the Ojibwe Language. While they are difficult to learn, stories play an important role in the Midewiwin religion.

> We have a story in the lodge that they pass on to us, and these stories are passed on in our language. They are really difficult, even for the masters to decipher and to translate. I know our story by heart and it is a beautiful story. Oral stories are best passed on when they are known in the heart really good so that nothing is missed or forgotten. (CR #2)

Stories, as a theme, were not always expressed explicitly by the coresearcher. Stories were often told to illustrate a meaning or

experience. When discussing the importance of the wolf to the Anishinaabe people, the following story emerged:

> I am going to tell you a little story about the wolf. One time there was a man who was walking home from town. As he walked through the woods he saw something up ahead. Soon there was a wolf running around him. And the wolf continued to do this for about five miles. He just ran around the man until he was almost home. Then the wolf disappeared. His Grandfather told him that the wolf brought him home. He protected you through the woods. That is how that story about the wolf goes. (CR #1)

Ojibwe Language

According to Vollom and Vollom (1994), "The Ojibwe language is intangible, untouchable, unseen and involves opening the heart with the realization that all things are interdependent. All beings have a spirit and should be respected" (p. ii).

As Cleary and Peacock (1998) state, the preservation and maintenance of tribal languages is a paramount concern of many American Indian people. One common belief is that if the language dies, the culture also dies because the language contains and perpetuates "the depth, subtleties, and nuances of the culture" (p. 125). The language viewed from this perspective implies that without the language, the songs, ceremonies, and oral traditions would be lost.

The Ojibwe language was expressed as important to the meaning of being Anishinaabe in two ways: (a) The Ojibwe Language Must be Recovered, and (b) The Ojibwe Language Spoken and Woven into the Interview.

In looking at this theme, it became apparent that a generation of Anishinaabe people were not taught their language. What emerged are the desires, struggles, and need to recover their Native language.

> I am the generation of Indian people, not the forgotten Indian, but the generation that did not learn our language. So, I am not proficient in my language. My parents were traditional people who spoke their language, and that is the only language they knew until they were taken away to the government boarding schools. They were punished each time they spoke their Ojibwe language. They carried that with them. So, by the time I was born my mother would not teach me the Ojibwe language. I had to go to classes to learn my language. When I am at the Pow-Wows now I can understand the Spiritual Advisor when he speaks the language, not word for word, but I understand what he is saying as he prays. This is significant for me. (CR # 7)

In some instances, it is forbidden to speak about certain situations or experiences in English. Had I known my language, I would have been entitled to more teachings and knowledge of my

culture. This is illustrated when the coresearcher was not allowed to explain, in English, the passing of a being into the Spirit World:

The English language does not allow for exact meaning to be expressed or exact translation of the Ojibwe language. To compensate, the coresearchers would move in and out of Ojibwe and English as the situation demanded, or in order to emphasize meaning and importance. The ability of the coresearchers to move in and out of the Ojibwe language appeared to be an easy task for them as the interview remained fluid and constant. In this instance, the coresearcher was explaining the importance of listening to the Elders, and understanding and appreciating the differences in their teachings and where the teachings came from. He also talks about how his Father, Grandfather, and Elders speak the Ojibwe language differently.

> I have listened to my Grandfather, my Father, the Elders, to this day, and all these years, I have listened to them. They have all talked in different ways. My Father said it different, my Grandfather said it different. There is an Elder and today, he says it different. Bakaan gewinawaa gii-izhi-ayaa giizhi-miinaawaa izhichiged (they are given different ways to say things). Dreams, talk, Geget, giizhwiin na Shinaabe giipi, ogii-pi-miinigoonini, Manidoo ge wiin, genii, gii-izhichige (Creator gave them those things, dreams). My father was given many things through his fast. His fast. Geget…akina gegoo, nibwa ogikendaan, Besh

> giniin gikendamamawin (He was given many things). He knew a lot of things, of which I do not know today. (CR #1)

Keep Traditions Alive/Bring Back the Culture

According to Gilliland (1999), the practices that have traditionally been done within the tribes are a training process—the sweat lodge, hunting, fishing, and storytelling—that teaches discipline, teaches an attitude towards Mother Earth, and provides an understanding and purpose of being. Because of this, keeping the traditions alive and brining back the cultural ways are viewed as vital to the continuation of the Anishinaabe people by all the coresearchers.

When asked what the Anishinaabe life entails, this coresearcher responded by talking about all the stories that are passed down from generation-to-generation. Passing on his stories and teachings was important to this coresearcher as were his possessions, such as his pipe, Drum, and feathers.

> The Anishinaabe life entails all the tales that were dreamt long time ago, and are passed down generation-to-generation. I will pass them on to my son. I will tell them to my children, my grandchildren, so they can continue and pass on all that I know today. I will pass on the things that my father knew; I will pass on my pipe; I will pass on my Drum; I will pass on my feathers; and I will pass on my language, the Ojibwe language. (CR #1)

It is often difficult to maintain the cultural ways because it is hard, if not impossible, to remove oneself from the influence of mainstream America. This coresearcher is searching to find a balance between maintaining the Anishinaabe ways while at the same time acknowledging the existence and effect that the mainstream culture has on the younger generation.

> A long time ago, the old people used to send the young people out to fast, and they would get their gift from that. Now days we don't do this because the people are not going that old way anymore. They are going more modern. They are afraid of the woods. They watch TV or play Nintendo. That is why we have to change our ways of caring. We have to try and go backwards, while at the same time moving forward to meet the demands of today's society. We have to keep our culture alive. (CR #3)

Ceremonies

Ceremonies are a way in which the Anishinaabe express their spirituality and connection with all beings. Ceremonies create and support the sense of community that is the foundation of tribal life. As Garrett (1999) states this community is not made up only of members of the tribe but includes all beings that inhabit the universe.

Ceremonies were divided into six subthemes. They are: (a) The Offering of Tobacco, (b) The Sweat Lodge Ceremony, (c)

Feasts and the Spiritual Plate, (d) Smudging, (e) The Naming Ceremony, and (f) The Eagle Feather Ceremony.

The offering of tobacco was spoken of extensively by the coresearchers. Tobacco is used either on a daily basis or offered to the Creator and other Spirits when they begin a trip, whether on land or water, or any time they seek protection.

Tobacco is often offered to the Creator and other Spirits by the smoking of the pipe, which is a ceremony in itself. It is believed that the prayers reach the Creator through the rising smoke.

> When we have any ceremony we start off with the offering of tobacco and the smoking of the pipe. That is important. During all of the ceremonies we address the Four Directions, we pray for the winged animals, thanking the Great Spirit for the four-leggeds, we pray for those people who are in crisis. When we pray, we pray for everyone. We pray for people all over the world, all the different nationalities. (CR #7)

Each coresearcher explained the significance of tobacco not only as it relates to the Anishinaabe people, but also how tobacco is used in their life and the meaning it holds for them. When I offered one of the coresearchers tobacco, she told me that she would ask the Creator to help her assist me. While I interviewed her, she often ran the tobacco through the fingers of her right hand

while her left hand remained cupped, in this way she caught any tobacco that spilled her through her fingers. As she moved the tobacco around, she would stop talking and concentrate on the tobacco that was in her hands.

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony was discussed in great detail by the coresearchers. The coresearchers mentioned that men and women sweats are run separately from each other. It is forbidden in the Anishinaabe culture to run mixed sweats according to the coresearchers in this study.

> The sweat lodge is where you go and purify your body and mind. A long time ago, my father, who was a Medicine Man, used to tell me that whenever they had a sweat, they built a lodge way out in the woods somewhere. They did not use the sweat over and over. It was really sacred, in their time. Women have their own sweats. For me, I could not go into a sweat with a woman because of how strong a woman is. It was forbidden, where I come from, to do that. Hopefully, they still do that. (CR #1)

Feasts are given to honor an event or as a celebration. The Spiritual Plate or Spirit Plate runs in conjunction with the feast. The Spirit Plate is an offering of food from the feast that is either buried in the ground or burned. It is believed that when a Spirit Plate is offered, the food on that plate goes up to the Spirit World and feeds the friends and relatives who have passed on.

The Drum is often honor because it is the heart beat of the Anishinaabe people. A feast is held in its honor and as part of the feast a Spirit Plate is offered. In this instance, this coresearcher believes that the Drum helps to complete the circle.

> Drums have always been the heart beat of our nation, that the Drum is always a part of us in some way. There are so many different Drums, but that Drumbeat is always in our life. Even before we were born. We honor these things the most by putting on a feast. When we have a feast, they have that little plate and it is their wish and prayer that this plate goes over to the other side and feed all those that are over there. So in essence, what they are saying, is that this plate will turn into a great big feast for those you think about when you are praying. That is what they do to honor that Drum. The Drum helps to complete that cycle. (CR #2)

Smudging is another way of purifying one's environment, one's regalia or clothing, and oneself. It is also a form of protection from others' moods, negative thoughts, or energy. Smudging involves the burning of one or more of the following sacred plants: sage, cedar, or sweetgrass. The smoke from these plants are used to purify and cleanse. The following illustrates the importance of smudging to these coresearchers:

> When we smudge things, we have all different ways to smudge. Some days I like cedar. Most days I like sage. And then if I am really sad, for some reason I like sweet grass. The smudging is a purifier, to

> cleanse my mind, my body, and the area that I am in. (CR #2)

According to Johnston (1982), the Naming Ceremony requires that a Medicine Person or a Spiritual Advisor be asked by the father or mother to seek a name for their child. The seeking can be done through fasting, meditation, prayer or dreaming. It is believed that the spirits give the name. At the ceremony the namer burns tobacco as an offering and pronounces the new name to the Creator and each of the Four Directions. The Spirit World then accepts and recognizes the face of the child as a living being for the first time. By agreeing to give a name, the namer assumes responsibilities that are comparable to that of a parent's.

This coresearcher believes that it is important for her and her family to receive their Indian names. She explains the process of the Naming Ceremony that her family went through.

> I offered tobacco to our Spiritual Advisor and asked if he would hold a Naming Ceremony for my children. When you hold a Naming Ceremony, you offer tobacco once again, then you also give gifts to the person doing the ceremony. It took a while to get the names. He had to dream about them. When he was ready he came down to do the ceremony which entailed smoking the pipe, and offering it up to *Gitchi Manitou*, the Great Spirit, the Four Directions, and Mother Earth. He explained the ceremony and I knew when he said your names in the Ojibwe language. We then had a feast for the

> names. He told you that you had to be kind to people. Once a year you have a feast in honor of your name. CR #7)

Spirituality

A fundamental view in the traditional way is that all things are alive and all things are connected. As Garrett (1996) states, it is believed that all things are alive and have spiritual energy and are connected by the circle of life. In the circle of life all things are connected, animals, plants, people, rocks and minerals, the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars and all the elements such as wind water, fire, thunder, and lightening which combine an intricate system of interdependence. The universe consists of a balance among all of these living beings. Anishinaabe spirituality emphasizes the harmony that comes from their connection with all parts of the universe in which everything has a purpose and is valued.

Spirituality was divided in to two themes (a) Spirituality as a Way of Life, and (b) Spirits and the Spirit World. To these coresearchers, Spirituality was expressed as being connected to and interrelated to all things and it is the way these coresearchers live their lives and how they treat all beings. Spirituality is being conscious of ones actions and aware of one's surroundings. Some

of the coresearchers believe that all Anishinaabe people are born into their spirituality.

> When I think of spirituality, we, Anishinaabeg, feel that each of us has a Spirit from the time we are conceived and it is with us throughout our lives. (CR #6)

The Anishinaabeg believe in the Creator or Great Spirit, as well as other Spirits. They are an important part of the Anishinaabe culture. Certain stories are told only in the winter when the Spirits are sleeping. This coresearcher, as he explains the Sweat Lodge Ceremony, refers to the Spirits and the role they play in the ceremony.

> As we say our prayers and we hear the Spirits when you come in, the Turtle comes to the top and pounces right on top. So everybody hears this noise, and says what is that, what is that. The also the Thunderbird comes flying in and you can hear the wings flying around. There are other animals that come in, like the bear always comes in, the Spirit Bear Gitchi Makwaa. He's a large bear too. And he looks into the face and sees each one of them. And they feel the heat from the nostrils. (CR #3)

Listen and Learn From the Elders

The Elders are important part of the Anishinaabe community. Traditionally, the Elders are the ones who teach the children because of their life experience and cultural knowledge. Elders often have the responsibility of directing children's

attention to the things with which they coexist, such as plants, animals, rocks, and the land, and the importance and meaning that they hold. In this way, Anishinaabe children develop a heightened level of sensitivity for all of the relationships of which they are a part and which are a part of them, for the circle of life and all the traditions and customs of their people (Gilliland, 1999).

This coresearcher recalls how an Elder passed on teachings to him.

> The Old Man who has passed on he told everything that he knew. I used to listen to him. He told stories in the wintertime. I was just small. He told me, always tell your people to give. Do not ever forget that, he said. (CR #1)

Emotionality

The concept of emotionality best captures the range of emotional responses and feelings that were evoked in the coresearchers recalling and telling their stories, teachings, and experiences. In speaking about the beauty of Midewiwin teachings, which are told in the Ojibwe language, this coresearcher was so overcome with emotion that he had to stop the interview for a few minutes in order to regain his composure.

> We have a story in the lodge that they pass on to us, and these stories are passed in our language. They are really difficult, even for the masters to decipher

> and to translate. I know our story by heart and it is a beautiful story. Oral stories are best passed on as when they are known in the heart, and really good so that nothing is missed or forgotten. We are given our Creation Teaching during our second year in the Midewiwin lodge. These are given on the Sacred Sand Scroll by a third or fourth degree Midewiwin that has been in lodge for many years. These teachings are done in our language. It just brings out such emotion, you can feel it, you can see it, and it is such a beautiful story. Recalling it right now brings tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat. (CR #2)

Keeping the traditions alive for one coresearcher was seen in passing on the language, ceremonies, and Spirituality of the Anishinaabe to her Grandchild. This was done immediately after the child was born and continues to this day. This coresearcher wants to be sure that someone in her family will keep the traditional ways alive. However, when sharing the importance of passing on the Ojibwe language and traditions to her Grandchild, this coresearcher became very emotional and began to cry.

Conclusion

As Deloria (1995) states, "every society needs educated people, but the primary responsibility of educated people is to bring wisdom back into the community and make it available to others so that the lives they are leading make sense" (p. 17). From

the Elders of this study, I now realize that the needs of the Anishinaabe youth are great. It is vital that these children be taught how to balance cultural beliefs with those of mainstream society. As one coresearcher states "It's not also easy to practice your culture and traditions because we walk in two worlds. It is important that we learn as a people to be comfortable in both worlds."

Implications for Future Research

Considering the sparse amount of research on the Anishinaabeg conducted from a Native perspective, and that there are no phenomenological studies that explore the meaning of being Anishinaabe, I believe that this study breaks new ground and has filled a gap in the scholarly professional literature. However, this is only a beginning, there is a need for future research to build upon in this area. Since this study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, one might see the use of conducting a comparative research study with young adults or adolescents. This is recommended due to the need expressed by the Elders to keep the traditions alive. Another consideration, if this research is undertaken, is that meanings and experiences may be different for reservation and off reservation participants.

Implications for Education

Multicultural education must be implemented and infused into all teacher education programs. Failure to do so produces and perpetuates the indoctrination of teachers into hegemonic thinking. However, before this change can occur education faculty must be willing embrace a new paradigm. While this is not always an easy task, providing inservices, workshops, and training courses that emphasize the importance of diverse perspectives is an important starting point.

To improve the quality of education for the American Indian student, providing educators (at all levels) with American Indian cultural awareness courses is an essential step towards understanding and accepting a perspective that is different and unique.

These courses would provide an understanding of local tribal government, treaty rights, history, culture, traditions, and spiritual beliefs. Teaching the teachers how to infuse this information into existing curriculum would also be an important component of the program. To cover American Indian issues separately from other topics only further marginalizes a group of people who are already clinging to the fringes of marginality.

Final Thoughts and Comments

The journey into the lived experiences of these 7 Anishinaabe Elders has been enlightening. The stories they shared revealed experiences that have sharpened my awareness and understanding of what it means to be an Anishinaabe. As the Elders described the meaning of being Anishinaabe, they focused on the high and low points of their experiences. It is by focusing on the day-to-day experiences as described by these Anishinaabe Elders, that I realize how much of the richness of their lived experiences goes unnoticed and are frequently taken for granted as they are lived. The reason why the stories of these Elders are especially valuable to the Anishinaabe people is that they bring to light the meanings that are often embedded in daily life. Their stories express a core of Anishinaabe beliefs and values. The ability of these Elders to move between many worlds (personal, cultural, and tribal) produces strength, resilience, and determination.

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